

Conflict Sociology

Studies in Comparative Social Science

A series edited by Stephen K. Sanderson

Plunging to Leviathan? Exploring the World's Political Future,
Robert Bates Graber (2005)

Revolutions: A Worldwide Introduction to Political and Social Change,
Stephen K. Sanderson (2005)

*The Depth of Shallow Culture: The High Art of
Shoes, Movies, Novels, Monsters, and Toys,*
Albert Bergesen (2006)

*Studying Societies and Cultures: Marvin Harris's
Cultural Materialism and Its Legacy,*
edited by Lawrence A. Kuznar and Stephen K. Sanderson (2007)

The Supernatural and Natural Selection: The Evolution of Religion,
Lyle B. Steadman and Craig T. Palmer (2008)

Judaism in Biological Perspective: Biblical Law and Judaic Practices,
edited by Rick Goldberg (2008)

Conflict Sociology: A Sociological Classic Updated,
by Randall Collins, updated and abridged by Stephen K. Sanderson (2009)

Conflict Sociology

A Sociological Classic

Updated

Randall Collins

Abridged and Updated by
Stephen K. Sanderson

Paradigm Publishers
Boulder • London

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be transmitted or reproduced in any media or form, including electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or informational storage and retrieval systems, without the express written consent of the publisher.

Copyright © 2009 Paradigm Publishers

Published in the United States by Paradigm Publishers, 3360 Mitchell Lane, Suite E, Boulder, CO 80301 USA.

Paradigm Publishers is the trade name of Birkenkamp & Company, LLC,
Dean Birkenkamp, President and Publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Collins, Randall, 1941-

Conflict sociology : a sociological classic updated / Randall Collins. — Abridged and updated /
by Stephen K. Sanderson.

p. cm. — (Studies in comparative social science)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-59451-600-9 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Sociology. 2. Social conflict. I. Sanderson, Stephen K. II. Title.

HM585.C65 2008

303.6 — dc22

2008027745

Printed and bound in the United States of America on acid-free paper that meets the standards of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials.

Designed and Typeset by Straight Creek Bookmakers.

13 12 11 10 09 1 2 3 4 5

Contents

Editor's Preface ix

Author's Original Preface vii

Chapter 1 The Bases of Scientific Sociology 1

Update 2009 7

Chapter 2 A Theory of Stratification 13

The Basics of Conflict Theory 19

Occupational Influences on Class Cultures 23

A Summary of Class Cultures 27

Conclusion 42

Update 2009 44

Chapter 3 Microsociology and Stratification 54

The Ethology of Human Animals 55

Human Language and Consciousness 64

An Experiential Foundation of Stratification 70

Appendix: Summary of Causal Propositions 103

Update 2009 110

Chapter 4 A Short History of Deference and Demeanor (with Joan Annett) 115

Types of Societies 121

Status Competition in America 136

The Evaporation of Deference Cultures 155

Appendix: Summary of Causal Principles 159

Update 2009 161

Chapter 5 State, Economy, and Ideology 167

The Organization of Violence 170

Technology and Military Organization 173

Ideology, Ritual, and Control 181

The Structure of Democracy 205

The Process of Historical Change 209

Update 2009 211

Chapter 6 Inequalities of Wealth 229

Market Models 230

Lenski's Conflict Theory 235

The Marxian Model 237

Toward a Theory of Wealth Inequality 239

Appendix: Summary of Causal Principles 246

Update 2009 249

Afterword 2009 258

Educational Systems and Educational Credentialism 258

A Conflict Theory of Organizations 263

A Sociology of the Intellectual World 265

Historical Change 269

Gender and the Family 273

Religion 273

Collins's Microsociological Turn 274

Linking Micro with Macro 278

Conclusion 279

References 281

Index 301

About the Author and Editor 320

Editor's Preface

I first read *Conflict sociology* in 1976, not long after it appeared. I knew immediately that its author, a very young thirty-four-year-old sociologist named Randall Collins, whom I had never heard of, was destined to become one of our greatest sociologists. I am very pleased that I have turned out to be right. I have followed Collins's work for years and read most of it, all of the books and the vast majority of the most important articles. It impresses me enormously. Although I do not agree with everything that Collins says, I agree with a large chunk of it, and I think that a conflict approach is the best way to go in contemporary sociology. Although Collins is world renowned, he has never achieved the godlike status accorded to Parsons and Merton, or more recently to Giddens, Bourdieu, Habermas, and Foucault. In a survey of sociological theorists I did a dozen or so years ago (Lord and Sanderson, 1999), Collins ranked seventh as the most important theorist, after those six theorists named previously. But in my opinion he should have been rated first. His ideas are better and far more sensible, much more closely tied to the findings of empirical research, and expressed in a much clearer and unpretentious prose than the hallowed European figures (and Talcott Parsons) could ever hope to achieve. His theoretical lead is a far better one to follow than the leads of the other eminent theorists of today's sociology.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I have undertaken the task of bringing out a new edition of Collins's first major book; indeed, I leaped at the chance when the idea was first broached to me by the publisher, Dean Birkenkamp. Although the book is more than thirty years old, it remains highly relevant and extremely important today, especially during this period when sociological theory is burdened with postmodernism and various other nonempirical subjectivisms. Established sociologists and graduate students alike can still benefit from a reading of *Conflict sociology*. However, the book is extremely long and thus too expensive to reprint as it is, and so it has been necessary to abridge as well as update it. In abridging this work I have tried to retain those parts that seem most central and that have held up the best. I have retained the first two stratification chapters, the chapter on deference and demeanor, and the one on state, economy, and ideology. I also kept the chapter on wealth and social mobility, although in the interest of saving space, the discussion of mobility was deleted. And I have retained a crucial part of the first chapter where Collins lays out some of his grounding assumptions about sociology as a cumulative science. I have updated *Conflict sociology* largely by drawing on work published by Collins since 1975, but I also discuss the work of other sociologists whose ideas bear directly on the major themes of Collins's book. Every chapter has been updated with new material located at the end of the chapter. I have also added a fairly lengthy afterword, in which I summarize the basic arguments of the sections of the book that have been removed (organizations, intellectual life, and gender) and add discussions of Collins's analyses of educational systems and educational expansion, religion, and historical change. Summaries of the main arguments of Collins's two latest books, *Interaction ritual chains* and *Violence: A micro-sociological theory*, are also provided, and I seek to show how his recent turn

toward a microsociology inspired by Durkheim and Goffman connects to his earlier more macro and more Weber-inspired ideas.

In my updating I have sometimes found it useful to refer back to the original work. In these instances I refer to it as *Conflict sociology 1975*.

This project was a labor of love, and I am very pleased that Randy was confident that I could do the job properly and that he is happy with the final result. Every minute I spent on this project was a joy. I hope that a new generation of sociologists and sociologists-in-the-making will gain as much from the book as I did three decades ago and as I have in rereading it today.

Stephen K. Sanderson
Riverside

Author's Original Preface

Sociology has been pursued for a number of motives. Many have sought in it practical benefits or ideological justifications—or perhaps only a pleasant career delving into some well-guarded academic niche. We have been at it on a large scale for quite some time now, and most of the results are disappointing. I make this judgment from the standpoint of yet another value: that a coherent, powerful, and verified set of explanatory ideas is one of the great things in the world, quite by itself. I do not assume that everyone ought to share this value; apparently too few in the social sciences have, for the promising advances of the past have given rise to little enough cumulative development. Yet practical application, for all the attention given it, has made little real headway, and the ideologists have settled nothing. I would maintain that neither of these enterprises will ever get anywhere, or even indicate where there is to go, until a true social science is made.

They are not the reasons for this book. It is motivated by a glimpse I have caught somewhere along the way of what some of the thinkers and researchers of past and present have accomplished. However incomplete and fragmented, there is a powerful science in the making. I have attempted to pull things together sufficiently to show where we are now.

This book focuses on conflict because I am attempting to be realistic, not because I happen to think conflict is good or bad. After reading this book, anyone who still judges explanatory concepts in terms of their value biases will not have grasped what it is about. Past theorists who have done the most to remove our thinking from the murk of artificially imposed realities that populate our everyday worlds have found a guiding thread for explanation in the existence of plurality and conflict. Their lead is worth special emphasis right now, when there is so much potential for getting our science straight, and so many vestiges of utopian unreality burdening our habitual modes of analysis. Eventually, of course, there will no longer be such a thing as conflict sociology or any other label; there will be only sociology without adjectives.

Looking back, historians will see a great intellectual revolution in the twentieth century—the establishment of a true social science. Whether external observers will find it a desirable thing to happen to the world is open to question. The explorers of this frontier have only one real justification: the adventure itself. It is to this invisible community stretching across the years that this book is dedicated.

I am indebted to Arthur L. Stinchcombe for critical comments on the entire manuscript, and to Joseph R. Gusfield, Aaron Cicourel, Stanford M. Lyman, Herbert Isenberg, and Christine Chaille for comments on various sections. Donald Pilcher kindly provided materials from his own research. Joan Annett, who coauthored Chapter 4, also provided assistance with other chapters. I have learned much from conversations and correspondence with Samuel W. Kaplan, Reinhard Bendix, Harold L. Wilensky, Alvin W. Gouldner, Bennett Berger, Warren O. Hagstrom, and Joseph Ben-David. What there is of value in this book is no doubt taken from them.

Randall Collins
Philadelphia and
San Diego